

Remarks

Claims

After entry of this Amendment, Claims 1-5, 7-24, and 26-46 are pending in the present application, with Claims 1, 16, 22, 28, 35, and 41 being independent. Applicants have amended Claims 1 and 22-24 and canceled Claims 6 and 25. Applicants also have added new Claims 26-46, which do not contain new matter and are fully supported by the specification. Additionally, Claims 7, 8, 13, 16, and 19 have been amended to correct informalities. The amendments to Claims 7, 8, 13, 16, and 19 were not made to address issues of patentability or to distinguish the cited prior art.

Summary of the Official Action

In the Official Action mailed October 1, 2003, the Examiner rejected, under 35 U.S.C. § 102, Claims 1-3, 5, 8, 9, 14, and 15 as being anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 6,149,441 to Pellegrino et al. and Claims 22-24 as being anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 6,141,528 to Remschel. Claims 10-13 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103 as being obvious in view of the combination of the Pellegrino and Remschel patents. Claim 25 is objected to as being indefinite. The Examiner indicated Claims 16-21 are allowable and that Claims 4, 6, and 7 would be allowed if rewritten in independent form including all of the limitations of the base claim and any intervening claims.

Response to the Official Action

A. Independent Claims 1 and 22

In response to the Official Action, Applicants have amended Claim 1 to include the allowable subject matter previously recited in Claim 6 and have amended Claim 22 to include a feature similar to the allowable subject matter recited in Claim 7. Applicants submit that Claims 1 and 22, as amended, and their associated dependent claims are allowable.

B. New Independent Claims 28, 35, and 41

Claims 28, 35, and 41 recite features similar to the allowable subject matter in Claim 6. Applicants submit that Claims 28, 35, and 41, and their associated dependent claims are allowable.

C. Claim Format and Abstract Objections

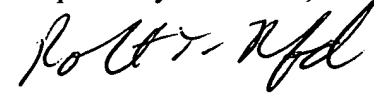
The Examiner objected to an informality in Claim 1. Claim 1 has been amended to address this objection. With the submission of this response, Applicants also cancel the abstract and provide a substitute abstract of shorter length in compliance with MPEP § 608.01(b).

Conclusion

The foregoing is submitted as a full and complete response to the first Official Action mailed on October 1, 2003 and the Notice of Non-Responsive Amendment mailed on January 20, 2004. The Applicants and the undersigned thank Examiner Christman for a careful review of the application and for the indication of allowable subject matter. The Applicants have amended Claims 1 and 22 to overcome the Examiner's rejections, amended Claims 7, 8, 13, 16, and 19 to address informalities, and added new Claims 26-46 that are patentable over the cited references and fully supported by the specification. The Applicants respectfully submit that the present application is in condition for allowance.

An early notice of allowance is hereby courteously solicited. If any other issues remaining in this application may be resolved by a telephone conference, the Examiner is respectfully requested to contact the undersigned at the following number in the Atlanta metropolitan area: (404) 572-3509.

Respectfully submitted,



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